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May 26, 1999

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JUN 01 1999

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Mr. Thomas W. Ferns  
U.S. Dept. of Energy  
Richland Operations Office  
P.O. box 550, MSIN HO -12  
Richland, WA 99352-0550

Dear Mr. Ferns,

I am writing to voice my concerns about the Hanford Reach and its preservation as a protected wildlife area. I am unable to attend the public hearings and appreciate your consideration of my thoughts.

I believe we need to actively preserve remaining natural areas that support wildlife -- both plants and animals. The Hanford Reach is already in public ownership and we have no compelling reason to develop this rare large tract of wild land. There will always be those who wish to develop or use the land for farming, mining or grazing cattle. They will argue that these uses do not harm the land. However, we have transformed most of Eastern Washington into these uses. Can we not allow a small percentage to remain in tact and natural? Wild lands are not simply home to a few plants or animals, they can allow an entire species to survive if the land is large enough in area.

It is easier at times to argue to preserve the dramatic wild places -- the Redwoods, the San Juan Islands, Yosemite. But diversity is essential to life on this planet. Once the shrub-steppe lands covered most of Eastern Washington, now very little remains. We need to preserve this last large tract of this eco-system for the salmon and the hawks, for the wildflowers and the pelicans, but also for ourselves. Being careful custodians of this incredible land we have inherited means looking out for the best interests of all life -- now and in the future -- not simply following what makes the most money today. How much is a wild salmon worth? a hawk flying free? fields of wildflowers? even if no one sees them? Just knowing they are there, living as they have for centuries, contributing to life on earth, is worth a lot to me.

Again, this land already belongs to us -- it costs us nothing to preserve it. Please do not give away our natural heritage.

Thank you,

  
Barbara Burk Zielstra